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ABSTRACT

An instructor, who teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses in storytelling, incorporates discussions of gender issues throughout the semester in various ways. In one course, class discussions are used to raise issues of the origin of Grimm's fairy tales and of story variants. Students are also encouraged to choose gender issues in storytelling as a research focus. In the graduate seminar devoted to college teaching, activities to spark interest in gender issues include viewing a video entitled "Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America," discussing gender inequities in higher education, analyzing textbooks to demonstrate how women's voices have sometimes been silenced, observing graduate teaching assistants, and allowing women a voice in improving their learning by having written assessments throughout the course of the semester. (Contains 15 sources.) (RS)

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TEACHING GENDER ISSUES IN STORYTELLING AND IN THE COLLEGE TEACHING CLASS

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I teach both an undergraduate and graduate course in storytelling. The accompanying syllabi indicate the focus of those classes. Gender issues are discussed through-out the semester in the following ways:

1. CLASS DISCUSSION OF THE ORIGIN OF GRIMM'S FAIRY TALES

The point is made that these tales were originally told by women (i.e. Nanny tales), but have often been altered from their own original versions.

Sources:

Livo, N.J. and Rietz, S.A. (1986). Storytelling: Process and Practice. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.

Lurie, A. (1990, Fall). Our controversial folk tales, Storytelling Magazine, 14-18.

Stern, C.S. and Henderson, B. (1993). "The Folk Tale and the Folklore of Display Events" (pp.72-106) in Performance: Texts and Contexts. New York: Longman.

2. CLASS DISCUSSION OF STORY VARIANTS

I use a variety of examples to show how gender is portrayed in well-known stories.

Sources:

Barchers, S.I. (ed). (1990) Wise Women: Folk and Fairy Tales from Around the World. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.

Garner, J.F. (1994). Politically Correct Bedtime Stories. New York: MacMillan.

Lowell, S. (1992). The Three Little Javelinas. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland.

Trivizas, E. (1993). The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig. New York: Scholastic Inc.

3. RESEARCH IDEAS: WRITING AND STORYTELLING BEYOND MALE-FEMALE DUALISM.

Students are encouraged to choose gender issues in storytelling as a research focus.

Sources:

Davies, B. (1993). Shards of Glass: Children Reading and Writing Beyond Gendered Identities. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.

COLLEGE TEACHING

In the graduate seminar devoted to college teaching, I introduce the following activities to spark interest in gender issues.

1. VIDEO: "SHORTCHANGING GIRLS, SHORTCHANGING AMERICA" (Available from the American Association of University Women. Running time: 18:58. Cost: $24,95. Order from AAUW Sales Office, P.O. Box 251, Dept. 245, Annapolis Junction, MD 20101-0251. Phone: 800-225-9998, ext. 245.)

After viewing the videotape, we discuss the gender bias present in classroom communication. I have teaching assistants evaluate their own question-asking behavior in the classroom, both as instructors and students.

2. CLASS DISCUSSION: GENDER INEQUITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Generally, I use the Sandler article as a springboard for discussion.

Sources:

Hensel, N. (1991). Realizing Gender Inequity in Higher Education: The Need to Integrate Work/Family Issues. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No.2. Washington, DC: George Washington University.

Sandler, B.R. (1991). Women faculty at work in the classroom; or, why it still hurts to be a woman in labor, Communication Education, 40, 6-15.

Tack, M.W. and Patitu, C.L. (1991). Faculty Job Satisfaction: Women and Minorities in Peril. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No.4. Washington, DC: George Washington University.

Women faculty excel as campus citizens (1990, Sept/Oct) Change, 39-43.

3. TEXTBOOKS AND GENDER

To demonstrate how women's voices have sometimes been silenced, I ask students to analyze the chapter titles, speakers included, and photographs used in public speaking texts and in public address/rhetorical criticism texts. We also examine texts where women's voices are the **only** ones included:

Sources:

De Francisco, V.L. and Jensen, M.D. (1994). Women's Voices in Our Time: Statements by American Leaders. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.

Foss, K.A. and S.K. (1991). Women Speaking: The Eloquence of Women's Lives. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.

4. OBSERVATIONS OF GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

As basic course director, I observe each of our teaching assistants at least once a semester. In observing their classes, I

note the following:

Description of Students:

1. Number of males and females
2. Ethnicity
3. Spatial arrangement in classroom
4. Number of traditional and non-traditional students

Classroom Activity:

1. Number of questions asked by males and females.
2. Number of comments made by males and females.
3. Response of students to instructor's presentation.
4. Group work (noting performance of groups and gender make-up of each group)

Classroom Climate:

1. Interpersonal communication of instructor and students
2. Student Involvement
3. Student interest
4. Enthusiasm of instructor

I provide each teaching assistant with a copy of my report. We discuss the comments and talk about how instruction can be improved.

5. CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PROJECTS

I coordinate the classroom research project for the basic course which involves the administration of three different assessment techniques in the course of a semester. GTA's tabulate their results from each assessment and write a one-page narrative. Since female students often do not voice their concerns in class, the anonymity of this activity allows the women a voice in improving their learning. The assessments we use include Minute Paper, Stop-Start-Continue, Muddiest Point, and a self-evaluation of student learning in the course.